

## North American Racing Academy Expands Program to Include Locust Trace Students

Dixie Hayes walked through the barn areas of Keeneland looking for just the right horses to bid on during the recent fall sale. She looked carefully at each weanling that was paraded past her, taking notes and conferring with her fellow buyers.

This scene was repeated with buyer after buyer during what has become one of the most widely attended sales of its kind in the world, the Keeneland November Breeding Stock Sale.



NARA students look over a weanling at the Keeneland Breeding Stock Sale held in November.

But Hayes isn't a thoroughbred farm owner or manager. She is a teacher – a program coordinator with the North American Racing Academy (NARA), which is located within the Bluegrass Community and Technical College (BCTC), and her comrades are actually her students.

Hayes, who has a degree in equine management from Midway College, teaches the Equine Studies program at BCTC and at Locust Trace Agri-Science Farm located in Fayette County.

“We’ve merged the two programs, basically, and we’re trying to create a filtering system where students interested in the equine industry go from the high school program into our two-year associate’s program and into a four-year degree program if they’re interested,” she said. “NARA now has the Horseman’s program based out of Locust Trace, so as a result, high school seniors and juniors can take these college-level classes with college students and gain high school and college credit.”

Hayes added that the high school students are getting a chance to experience college while in high school.

“The really neat thing is that the high school students are taking a college-level class with a college instructor but at the dual credit state fee, which is \$50, and Fayette County Public Schools has been gracious enough to pay that for these students,” she said.

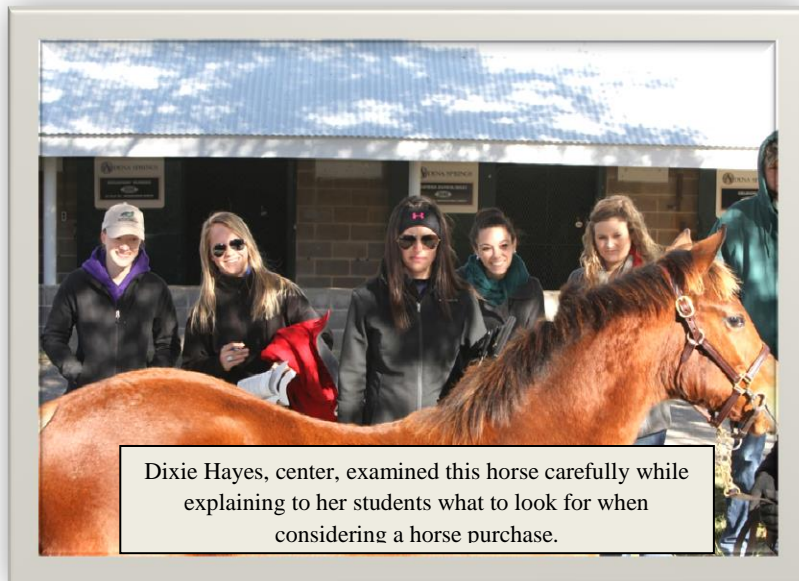
This arrangement saves the students tuition costs while giving them a taste of being in college. Hayes wants to bring in 10 Locust Trace students each year into the program.

“Our goal is that by the time the seniors graduate, they will have gone through four classes with us (BCTC) and that will make them eligible for a college-level certificate,” she said.

Those students, in turn, will experience internships with local horse farms and trainers and apply what they have learned in their classes.

“We’re also doing a workforce certificate for the other students at Locust Trace who are not eligible to come into this program,” Hayes said.

This semester marks the first for the merged programs and, while dual credit with the two schools has been present, this is a first in having the college class taught at the high school.



Dixie Hayes, center, examined this horse carefully while explaining to her students what to look for when considering a horse purchase.

NARA was established in 2006 by Hall of Fame jockey Chris McCarron as a jockey school.

“It has expanded and now includes a Horseman program, and I came on about three years ago,” said Hayes. “Since then, 100 percent of our Horseman graduates have been placed in internships and hired from those internships.”

Students are being placed all across the country and throughout the world, Hayes added.

“We have already sent several students to Dubai and this year, we’re looking to go to France,” she said.

Being in the Horse Capital of the World, industry support has been strong for the program, according to Hayes.

“The industry, especially since we have expanded, they have been very interested in what we’re doing with the Horseman’s program,” she said. “My goal is that these students are well versed and that they’re ready for careers as trainers, farm managers and bloodstock agents and able to come into the industry well-rounded.”

The program helps students learn about conformation in its bloodstock class. Equine

conformation deals with the correctness of a horse's bone and muscle structure and how that can affect the sale price of a horse, she said.

As students walked around Keeneland looking at horses, Hayes discussed things like conformation with them in deciding on what horses they should consider bidding. Buying young horses to resell in a year is one component of the program and gives students a hands-on perspective of a part of the business in which they could one day be involved.

Students also learn to identify conformational defects and confer with veterinarians about the issues, something that gives them a different perspective should they decide to go into equine veterinarian services, Hayes noted.

With Locust Trace housing an advanced veterinarian tech laboratory, students interested in that area have a distinct advantage with both programs there.

Hayes said many people don't realize how many different jobs are related to the horse industry, like those working in the coordination of sales such as the ones at Keeneland; nomination managers who select the mares to be bred with the stallions; and many office positions on farms and at race tracks, just to name a few.

"There is just a plethora of jobs and that is one of our goals, to make these students aware of what the job opportunities are," she said.

Hayes has experience in many of the jobs, having managed several large farms in the area, including that of a licensed trainer for three years. But teaching filled a void she felt in those other jobs.

"After my last management position, I had just sold my first million-dollar horse, but I wasn't satisfied. I still had not reached what I wanted in career goals, so I decided to get into teaching," she said. "I love the program and I love teaching students who want to learn something that they want to learn about."

Those students are benefiting from Hayes' experience and knowledge of horses and the horse business.

Bailey Hughes is a senior at Locust Trace. She grew up in the horse industry, so choosing the program was natural.

"I always saw the racing side, but I never saw what goes on behind the scenes like buying and selling, the bloodlines and what makes a great racehorse," she said. "I wanted to be a part of

that.”

Hughes added that she hopes to stay in the business and keep the family name going in the industry.

“My parents have been very supportive, and when I heard this was available, I jumped at the chance and asked every day who made it in, and I was on the list.”

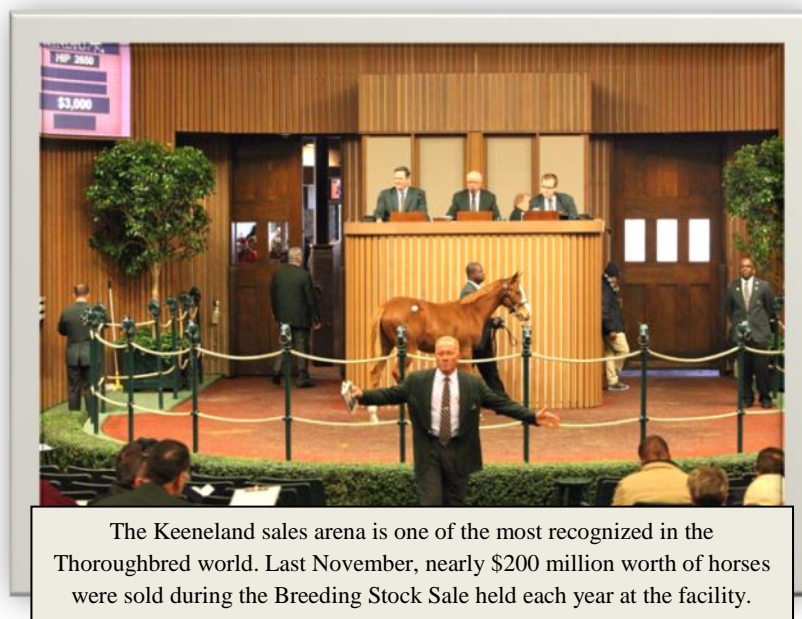
Lindsey Marcum also is a senior in the program. Having attended Locust Trace for a year, she heard the program was coming and thought it would be a great opportunity to learn more about the Thoroughbred side of the horse industry.

“I’m really the first one in my family to be truly interested and want a career in the horse business,” she said. “But my family has always been into farming.”

Marcum added that she didn’t realize she would get to go to a place like Keeneland and put what she was learning into practical use, but it has been really surprising and fun as well as helpful in the classroom.

“We have learned how to read the sales books and about conformation; how the horse is put together and what makes them a great racehorse,” she said.

Corrie Buckles, another senior student also brought horse and farming backgrounds to the program.



The Keeneland sales arena is one of the most recognized in the Thoroughbred world. Last November, nearly \$200 million worth of horses were sold during the Breeding Stock Sale held each year at the facility.

“I wanted to be with the horses. That’s what I came for,” she said. “I wanted to get involved in the BCTC program to learn more about the Thoroughbred industry. It was intriguing to me to learn about the breeding, the bloodstock and the sales.”

Buckles said she would like to finish the program at BCTC and likely transfer to Morehead State University. She hopes to have a farm one

day and stay in the breeding, bloodline and sales end of the business.

“This program has taught me a lot already, and I’ve learned so many things I would not have learned yet, so I think it is very beneficial,” she said.

While the buying trip ended without a purchase, the group did get to bid and experience the atmosphere.

Hayes said the idea was to bring a horse back to the school, work with it for a year and take it back to sell and make a profit.

“We will try again at the next sale,” she said. “The market was very strong this year, so the prices were phenomenal, which is great for sellers but not so much for buyers.”

With a purchase, Hayes said the students will learn about the bloodline, pedigree analysis and how to feed and train the horses properly over a year to ensure proper growth through nutrition and training plans.

As with any business, the idea is to buy and sell while making a profit, so in addition to the equine industry, students also are getting a first-hand look at the world of business.

The day ended with students and teacher watching buyers from all over the world bid in one of the most famous horse-selling venues in the world. Quite an experience, they all agreed and with the training they are receiving, maybe some of these future Thoroughbred professionals will sell their first million-dollar horse someday soon.



NARA students get a well-rounded education concerning the horse industry including conformation which deals with the correctness of a horse's bone and muscle structure and ultimately affects the sale of the animal.